

Autism Society Creates Platform Recommendations for Presidential Campaigns

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By Autism Society

The Autism Society has proposed recommendations pertaining to autism services and policies for inclusion in the presidential candidates' respective platforms. On July 2, the Autism Society met with Romney campaign staff members. In one month, the Autism Society will meet with the staff of President Obama's campaign. The purpose of each meeting is to present the Autism Society's non-partisan recommendations to the campaigns.

The following platform recommendations are currently being shared with staff of the Obama and Romney presidential campaigns:

Since 1964, the Autism Society has been the largest grassroots autism organization dedicated to improving the lives of thousands of individuals nationwide. The Autism Society's charge is to ensure the 1 in 88 individuals with autism in the United States have the opportunity to maximize their independence, self-sufficiency and autonomy. Working with its network of 117 chapters across the country, the Autism Society is the nation's best effort at changing lives.

As our nation prepares for the presidential election, the Autism Society is identifying its Key 10 National Priorities that we believe should be included in any national political party platform. With the tremendous growth in the number of individuals now being diagnosed with autism, it is imperative that the needs of those with autism, their families and the professionals serving this community are addressed.

A guiding principle of the Autism Society is that individuals who have an autism diagnosis must be an integral voice in any national and state discussion on addressing the needs of those who are daily impacted by autism. We strongly encourage that each presidential candidate's administration and citizen input panels be inclusive of people who have an autism diagnosis in all aspects of decision-making related to helping all those affected by autism. To exclude is wrong. It is imperative that our nation recognize and embrace the contributions of all who have an autism diagnosis.

The Autism Society encourages each presidential candidate to support the following ideals:

1. A person living with autism or another developmental disability must be assured the protected right to quality education, employment, housing and services. This right must be recognized by federal and state governments.

2. Medicaid funding must not be cut, as it is the primary financial support for individuals with developmental disabilities. Reducing Medicaid funding will drastically hurt those individuals whose lives depend on Medicaid's health insurance provision and community support funding.
3. A person currently receiving Medicaid for community services should be able to continue to receive that support when he moves to another state. No individual should be denied the right to move to another state due to a job or support need.
4. States should be allowed greater flexibility to use federal funding for outcome-based care and must be required to show measurable progress. The Autism Society defines progress as advancement toward self-sufficiency, independence and autonomy.
5. Autism must be treated as a whole body condition. Health insurance companies must provide coverage for other services in addition to medical treatments, such as behavioral therapies, which are often very expensive but can have very positive outcomes for individuals on the spectrum.
6. Individuals and families living with autism or another developmental disability should be provided tax savings or credit opportunities to place money in an account that can be used for services they need. We strongly urge that the passage of the ABA Act be a priority of any person seeking the office of President of the United States.
7. Bullying and restraints and seclusion that harm students at school are very serious issues that need a national solution right now.
8. The high unemployment of adults with developmental disabilities must be a priority to be addressed by government agencies and the private sector. All individuals should have the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment based on skill level.
9. Federal housing, justice, employment and other government programs that are for the general public should be required to prove they do not discriminate against individuals with developmental disabilities.
10. Other government agencies and departments, and not just Health and Human Services, should have a seat on the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, which brings together public and private entities to coordinate autism services and support programs nationwide. The Autism Society urges this council to address the following needs: transitional services, living support, the growing socioeconomic disparity preventing people from accessing a diagnosis and vital autism services. All individuals with autism should enjoy protected civil rights.

The Autism Society is a nonpartisan organization that exists to advocate on behalf of all individuals affected by autism.